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Innovations in the teaching of Portuguese as a Heritage a Language – the case of Brazilian complementary schools in London and in Barcelona

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1 Introduction

The teaching of Brazilian Portuguese as a Heritage Language (POLH, from the Portuguese *Português como Língua de Herança*) is a recent phenomenon (Mendes, 2012). This situation is due to emigration from Brazil becoming significant only in the second half of the 1980s, when the U.S. was the main destination for Brazilians venturing abroad. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE], 2011), the U.S. is still the country with the largest number of Brazilian emigrants; however, Europe has also emerged as an important destination for this population.

After Portugal, Spain has the most significant number of Brazilians, as reported by the Brazilian Ministry of International Relations (MRE, 2015). Of the Brazilians who settle in Spain, 22% have chosen to settle in Catalonia, in northeastern Spain (Solé, Cavalcanti, & Parella, 2011). According to the Instituto d'Estadística de Catalunya [Institute of Statistics of Catalonia] (2014), 9% of the Brazilians in this region are children aged 0 to 14 years old. The statistics are actually higher if the number of children with dual nationality is considered. Despite this, the number of institutions that cater to these children is limited to three, one in Madrid and two in Barcelona.¹ Two of these institutions only offer cultural activities and only one of them, located in Barcelona, includes language instruction.

The UK has the third largest number of Brazilian immigrants in Europe (MRE, 2015), with over 6% of these emigrants having settled in England (IBGE, 2011), the highest concentration being in London. These statistics are reflected in the number of complementary schools, i.e., weekend schools run by the community, that teach Brazilian POLH in London, which increased from one to 13 between 1997 and 2014 (Souza & Barradas, 2014).

This chapter discusses the introduction of innovations in the teaching of POLH in relation to the organizational changes developed in two complementary schools: the one in Barcelona that includes language instruction and another in London. These schools were developed independently of each other, with the London school predating the Barcelona school. Both focus schools are presented with a description of their educational contexts as well as their procedural and organizational innovations. This description is followed by an evaluation of how far the relevant innovations have

been assimilated into the structures of both schools, i.e., institutionalized. This evaluation is done within Ekholm and Trier's (1987) framework, which considers five indicators of institutionalization, some of which will be considered in this chapter. The description and the evaluation of both schools are based on questionnaires, participant observation, and in-depth interviews with their directors, teachers, and pedagogical coordinators—the latter having responsibility for overseeing both the overall pedagogical direction of the school as well as its implementation at the classroom level.

The examples used to illustrate how the two Brazilian complementary schools in Europe are dealing with innovations show that they follow six stages toward institutionalization: (1) parents feel the need to socialize their children with other families; (2) a small group of parents together socialize their own children informally; (3) other families are attracted to the idea and join the group; (4) the initial group of parents becomes the Executive Committee and the school is formally created; (5) teachers from outside the group are hired; and (6) growth leads to changes in the procedural and structural organization of the school.

We argue that both schools experience these six stages of institutionalization in a cyclical process, as shown in Figure 8.1 below. The arrival of new migrant families and the formation of new families abroad create a constant flow of members joining the schools. These members bring with them their needs, which influence the actions of the Executive Committee of the schools and the hiring of new teachers. The families, the committees, and the teachers influence the procedural and structural changes in the schools, which attract more families to join and sustain the cycle of innovations.

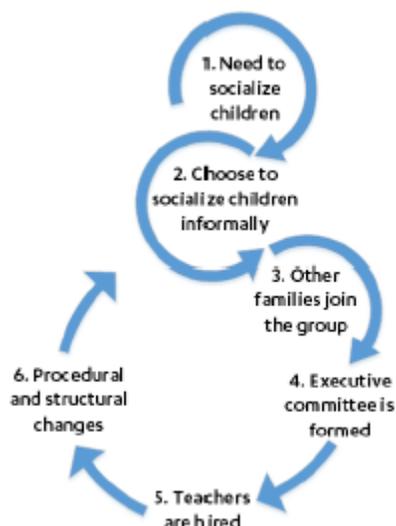


Figure 1: Institutionalization stages of Brazilian complementary schools in London and in Barcelona

We conclude by emphasizing the importance of collaboration and of consciously engaging with change to ensure innovations are successfully implemented.

2 The Study

This chapter draws on data collected from the two focus Brazilian complementary schools between December 2014 and February 2015 in London and Barcelona.

With the purpose of exploring the innovation process followed by these schools, we interviewed some of their stakeholders. A total of three teachers, one coordinator, and six directors linked to the

school in London between 1997 and 2004 were interviewed individually. The participants in Barcelona, three teachers and two directors, have links with the school that range in length from one to five years. Both sets of participants were selected due to their direct involvement with the innovations in their schools. We acknowledge, however, that this chapter discusses the perspective only of members who had a positive experience of the institutionalization process, as they are the ones who have been closely involved with the schools. Accessing the participants who had a negative experience was a challenge which we hope to overcome in future studies. Having said that, the core group of volunteers at the schools mostly agreed and supported the innovations.

The interviews were semi-structured, lasted up to two hours, and were conducted in accordance with ethical considerations. All the participants were provided with an information sheet and had the chance of asking further questions before signing an informed consent with permission for their interviews to be audio-recorded. They were guaranteed confidentiality in relation to their specific comments. Furthermore, the participants read a draft of this chapter before publication. In this way, transparency in the research process was ensured and the participants had the opportunity to weigh in on our understanding of the information they had provided.

The data provided by each participant were transcribed in Portuguese and then initially analyzed according to the categories set in the interview guide and the questionnaire used in the semi-structured interviews. Any other relevant issues raised by the participants were then added to the analysis.

3 From Innovation to Institutionalization: Theoretical Background

Institutionalization is the stage in which innovations are assimilated into the structure of a school and become part of its routine (Ekholm & Trier, 1987). Although innovation tends to be discussed as an improvement, Morrish (1976/2012) reminds us that it is in fact the introduction of something new and different, but not necessarily good nor better. Therefore, considering institutionalization to be the last stage of a school improvement process means that an innovation has been judged as having a positive impact. This is the case in the Brazilian complementary schools we discuss. School improvement, in turn, is a strategy for educational change that is rooted in practice (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2012). But what is change? Change is a move from a presently accepted state of affairs to the adoption of a new one. Miles (1967, as cited in Morrish, 1976/2012) argues that “change tends to be more spontaneous than ‘innovation’, which is more planned and deliberate” (p. 22). However, based on the processes experienced by the schools described in this chapter, we consider the boundaries between these phenomena (“change” and “innovation”) to be blurred and, thus, use them interchangeably to discuss an aspect that tends to be the focus of educational change: the curriculum.

Kelly (1997/2009) advocates that “curriculum” should be used to describe the overall rationale for educational programs, whereas “syllabus” is limited to the planning of the content to be transmitted. These terms (curriculum and syllabus) are commonly misused, including by the schools we discuss. In examining their contexts more closely, it is clear that what they describe as curriculum is, instead, a list of topics and grammar points, which corresponds to syllabus. Nonetheless, the procedural and structural organization adopted by the Brazilian complementary schools in developing their lists of topics and grammar points are relevant in better understanding the educational changes they experienced.

For school improvement to be successful, school staff need to hold a positive attitude towards lifelong learning, adopt shared goals, have mutual respect, be supportive of each other, and not fear taking risks (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2012). The nurturing of collaboration in schools can sustain a community of learners and potentially contribute to the efficacy of the change being implemented (Antonacci & Bernhardt, 1998). In fact, Ekholm and Trier's (1987) five indicators that institutionalization is taking place relate to how people work together. They are (1) the successful negotiations in which people are involved to reach agreements on the innovations; (2) the allocation of time, material, and personnel resources for the implementation of innovations; (3) the acceptance of the innovation as being legitimate by different parties; (4) the creation of organizational procedures to avoid dependence on specific persons for the continuation of the change implemented; and (5) the acceptance of the innovation as a common practice with diminished visibility.

We adopt these indicators as the framework for evaluating how far innovations have been assimilated into the structures of the Brazilian complementary schools in London and Barcelona.

4 From Innovation to Institutionalization: An Evaluation

In evaluating the institutionalization of these schools, it seems important to mention the close relationship that the researchers have with the settings. Souza was a volunteer in the school in London between 1999 and 2004. In the first year, she volunteered as a classroom assistant. Due to her professional background, she soon got involved with pedagogical issues and volunteered as an assistant pedagogical coordinator. This role lasted for a year, during which time the innovations started to take place. In 2000, the coordinator left the school and Souza was promoted to the role. In that capacity, she structured the school into groups, or levels, according to age and linguistic competence, developed a materials bank, wrote a Teachers' Handbook, and implemented new procedures for planning the annual syllabus and the individual lessons. Gomes, in turn, has worked in the school in Barcelona since 2012. She started as a teaching assistant and due to her academic and professional background with preschool children, became a class teacher of the 6–7-year-old group in 2013. In 2015, she joined the school's Executive Committee as a secretary.

Being insiders gave us rich insights into the running of the schools and firsthand knowledge of the process of introducing the innovation. Nevertheless, we are aware of the ethical implications of our duplicate roles as participants in the improvement of the schools as well as researchers. We understand the importance of positioning ourselves in a way which allows qualitative data to be appropriately represented and have considered ways to keep a balance between being insiders and outsiders, an important issue in qualitative research (Meksenas, 2002). In addition to our reflection on our insider/outsider roles, as noted earlier, the participants had the opportunity to read and give feedback on our understanding of the information they had provided and we had observed.

The Brazilian Complementary School in London

In England, heritage languages are mainly taught in complementary schools (Lytra & Martin, 2010). These schools are created by migrant groups to preserve their linguistic and cultural heritage as a complement to the formal education offered by their host society (Keating, Solovova, & Barradas, 2013). In keeping with this tradition, Brazilian families in the UK have shown how important the Portuguese language is to their communities by organizing institutions to maintain their children's

use of Portuguese (Souza, 2008). The first Brazilian complementary school on record in London offered lessons on Saturday mornings between 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. in rented rooms in a community center. The school was founded by a group of mothers in 1997, and is the focus of this study. Between then and 2004, the school faced innovations related to two organizational aspects: (1) becoming legally classified as a charity institution and (2) the implementation of procedural and structural changes regarding how pupils were grouped and how content planning was done for an entire year as well as for individual lessons. For the purpose of the discussion in this chapter, we focus mainly on the latter aspect.

Content planning was a complex multi- step process. It started with the annual meeting between the teachers, the coordinators, and the Executive Committee of the school to decide on an overall theme for the academic year. The teachers were then given a scheme of work² template to be completed with topics for each of their lessons. A second meeting was held between the coordinators and the teachers to bring their ideas together and consider the vocabulary items and grammar points to be explored within the topics they presented. The coordinators collected the teachers' draft schemes of work, which were then cross- referenced and revised to ensure that similar topics were covered in all four groups around the same time. The language content was also checked for its suitability to the age and the level of the different groups. The revised schemes of work were emailed to the teachers for their perusal. In a third meeting, materials and activities were suggested by the team for the different lessons. Having completed the cycle for the annual planning, the teachers were given lesson plan templates and were expected to plan their lessons for the month, i.e., four sessions, in advance and with as much detail as possible. Monthly meetings were held between the coordinators and the teachers to discuss their lesson plans, exchange further ideas on activities, and share teaching materials. This planning input was followed up by lesson observations that included a feedback session to evaluate the teachers' achievements and to support them in developing their teaching skills.

Negotiations

Careful consideration of the needs of the school and its pupils led to the adoption of a system for planning the annual program and individual lessons as well as for standardizing their lesson content. The changes emerged from a period of expansion (stage 3 of the institutionalization process, refer to Figure 8.1), which required more structural and procedural organization (stage 6). As a member of the school Executive Committee described it: "As the school developed, things were being improved in response to the demands of the parents and the experience of the different people joining us"³ (Committee member 3). The improvements included the hiring of teachers (stage 5) to deliver lessons, instead of the informal socialization activities organized by the mothers who started the group (stages 1 and 2).

All the participants (directors, coordinators, and teachers) were consulted about the proposed changes and felt that there was space for them to make suggestions. Both informal and formal agreements were made for implementing the changes, as one of the teachers explains below:

We were regularly consulted. There was space for us to make suggestions and participate actively. The result of our negotiations was recorded as we went along, and then it was published in a document called the Teachers' Handbook. (Teacher 1)

Resource Allocation

Being a registered charity, the school in London charged only a nominal fee to cover room rental and teachers' and assistants' salaries. The Executive Committee was organized by and consisted of parents who worked for free along with other volunteers (stage 4 of the institutionalization process). All the activities that took place in addition to the weekly two hours of teaching were done on a goodwill basis.

The discussions, the planning, and the implementation of the innovations were slotted into personal calendars as needed. Consequently, none of the participants could say precisely how much time was used for these activities; nevertheless, at least for some periods the time commitment was extensive. A committee member describes the situation as follows: "There was a period in which the school basically took over almost everything I did. It was part of my weekends and of my week."
(Committee member 1)

Although there was no allocation of extra financial resources for these activities, the teachers felt supported. They recalled having been given articles to read on issues related to the teaching of POLH by the coordinator and being involved in the development of guidelines and materials. The account below is representative of the teachers' opinions:

It was always like 'Let's do it together' . . . I felt at ease to say when I was having difficulties and to ask for help. . . It was very important because it made me feel that we were working as a team, we supported each other . . . we were given suggestions [on what to include in our lessons and on how to present them to the children]. I had the freedom to make choices and felt supported on how to better implement them. (Teacher 3)

Rise in Legitimacy

The teachers' high level of involvement in the negotiations (see Negotiations above) enabled them to also have a high level of familiarization with the changes, which built a sense of their legitimacy. Teachers did not need incentives or encouragement to try to implement the changes suggested. On the contrary, seeing themselves as part of the process, they were extremely motivated to experiment with the changes proposed. As one of the teachers explains below, the pedagogical meetings contributed to the incorporation of positive changes into their routines:

The meetings were crucial in my learning of how to adapt my previous experience in Brazil to the teaching of Portuguese as a community language. . . The meetings created a space in which we could discuss and reflect on our different perspectives. I learned a lot . . . in this process. It supported me to make decisions about the content of my lessons in relation to the themes covered and the grammar points explored. (Teacher 2)

These feelings were shared by the members of the Executive Committee, who saw the school activities as having a dual function: improving the overall structure and organization of the school and of the learning experience of their children by responding to the needs of the families. For instance, Committee member 2 said:

The Play and Sing group, for example, was created because a member of the Committee had their second child. Then we started asking, 'Why can their older child attend lessons but we

do not offer anything to their second child?' Personal issues such as these made us very involved with the changes.

Organizational Conditions

The school started with its founders socializing their children informally in a mothers' group (stage 1 of the institutionalization process). They soon realized that there was a need to get formally organized (stage 2). However, it took a few years for the Executive Committee members to develop specific roles and a vision for the school. As the school evolved (stage 3), this led to the restructuring of the school from an informal to a more formal entity, including establishing it as a charity in 2000 (stage 4). Committee member 4 describes the process as follows:

We started to have meetings with the new volunteers . . . and the new Committee members on how to work as a charity institution. We took a step forward in relation to formally structuring the administration of the school.

In addition, the role of pedagogical coordinators was created, which meant a change in the organizational structure of the school. This created a supportive network within the school in which the Committee members supported the coordinators, who then supported the teachers in implementing the changes. All parties involved acknowledged that both coordinators had a key role in the innovations, as illustrated below by Committee member 6:

The changes were very centred on the pedagogical coordinators . . . All the decisions relating to teaching and teachers were left to them. We were involved in the changes proposed by them, but we fully trusted their professional knowledge and experience.

Diminishing Visibility

The indicators of acceptance of the innovations as common practices with diminished visibility overlap with the creation of organizational conditions for the innovations (stage 6). In the case of the complementary school in London, a Teachers' Handbook was produced in 2003 to compile individual documents produced in response to the needs identified in the change process. Involving the teachers and documenting this process was a way of ensuring continuity in the work being developed, as one of the coordinators explains:

It was an attempt to develop a more coherent work plan and one which could enable continuity. . . The turnover of the teachers is very high! So the people who joined later would need to know what to do, which direction to go, what is expected of them.
(Coordinator 1)

The changes have been adopted as standard procedure, aided by processes of ongoing documentation, an important element of which is the Teachers' Handbook. As one of the Committee members confirms:

"There was definitely continuity [of the changes implemented in 2003]. All the documentation that was produced before I joined the school was kept in use." (Committee member 5).

Those interviewed overwhelmingly felt that the organizational conditions accompanying the innovations in this school meant that the changes were accepted by the majority of stakeholders and adopted as the school's routine procedures.

The Brazilian Complementary School in Barcelona

The teaching of POLH in Barcelona started in 2010 (Moroni & Gomes, 2015). A school was created as an association in 2009 by a group of Brazilian parents who considered it important to transmit their language and culture to their children as they grew up in Catalonia (stage 1 in the institutionalization process). A teaching program started in 2010 with the recruitment of teachers (stage 5) for classes being held on Saturday mornings between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. in a public Civic Centre. Since then, the number of pupils has increased fivefold (stage 2).

As in London, the increase in the number of pupils and their diverse linguistic profiles led to the implementation of changes in relation to (1) their grouping in different classes and (2) the development of teaching content. In order to allow for a parallel comparison to the school in London, only the second type of change experienced by the school in Barcelona is discussed below

Negotiations

In Barcelona, all the interviewees agreed that the changes being implemented were responses to an increasing number of students and families engaged in the project (stage 3), which had considerably increased the administrative workload and demanded a restructuring and a division of labor that was not needed before (stage 4). One member of their Executive Committee highlighted the organic way in which these changes began to be developed: "The need to structure the school became evident and we started to do it in the way we thought to be correct." (Committee member 1)

Having said that, all the decisions concerning the school organization were proposed and discussed between parents and the Executive Committee through formal meetings in which both groups had voting rights. In regards to the weekly lessons, two meetings per year were held between parents and teachers. In other words, all the changes were discussed in a formal and collective way. This process had a positive impact on the change negotiations, as noted by one of the teachers: "These meetings give us the opportunity to listen to the parents' feedback [on their children's experiences in the school] and to provide them with relevant information about our work in the classroom." (Teacher 2)

Resource Allocation

The school in Barcelona is a registered non-profit association. It started its activities with no financial support, except for the monthly fees paid by the parents to cover the teachers' salaries and the purchase of teaching materials. Three years after its foundation, however, the school was one of the first Brazilian institutions in Europe to receive a recently created grant from the Brazilian government in support of the teaching of POLH through the Programa de Difusão de Língua e Cultura (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, n.d.).

As in London, the parents and the members of the Executive Committee in Barcelona cannot say precisely how much time they dedicate to the activities of the school. Nevertheless, with the aim of not overloading any of their members, the school adopted an organizational structure in 2014 (stage

4), as an Executive Committee member explains: “Due to the rapid growth [of the school], the need to delegate tasks and create proceedings became evident. So . . . we created four sub- committees: teaching issues, financial resources, educational projects, and cultural events.” (Committee member 2)

This new organizational structure is an important support network for the teachers, despite the fact that it does not include a pedagogical coordinator. The sub- committee for teaching issues focuses on communication between the Executive Committee, the parents, and the teachers. It also liaises with the sub- committee for financial resources in regards to the acquisition of teaching materials and the teachers’ participation in courses, workshops, and other events related to the teaching of POLH. In the words of one of the teachers, “Heritage language is a new field and a new context for us. Attending training is essential for [the development of] our work.” (Teacher 1)

Rise in Legitimacy

The participants in Barcelona reported having high levels of familiarity with the change process that their school was undergoing (stage 6). This is a result, in part, of the team ethos of the school, which is highlighted by one of the teachers:

Whenever an issue is raised, either by the parents or by the Executive Committee, we [teachers] are consulted. We know that our views are taken into account. As such, I can say that the changes are agreed in a collective way. (Teacher 3)

This participation in the decision- making process is highly valued, as another teacher emphasizes: “Taking part in the school’s decision- making process and being able to reflect on relevant issues as a group contribute to the better acceptance of the changes suggested.” (Teacher 1)

The adoption of standards for promoting pupils from one academic year to another serves by way of example of how different parties are involved in the process of making decisions in this school. The teachers decided among themselves that learning criteria should replace the age- based criterion by which students progressed to the next level. Their suggestions were then presented to the Executive Committee. Having agreed on the proposals made by the teachers, a second meeting that included the parents was organized. It was only after the three parties had become familiar with, understood, and agreed on the changes that they were implemented.

Organizational Conditions

The changes in the school in Barcelona have affected the way in which it is managed and the procedures it follows (stage 6). Focusing on the latter issue, the teachers are presently writing a document which aims to record the procedures they are developing, including the selection of themes for the academic year, the content of the individual lessons, the teaching resources, the aims of the different groups, and the assessment criteria. One of the teachers pinpoints the relevance of this document for the school:

Writing this document has been an enriching experience. This project is enabling us to reflect as a group on which aspects of our work we would like to develop further, which new procedures could be implemented, and what could be adapted or even discarded. (Teacher 1)

Furthermore, there is an agreement on the need to establish standards which make the work possible without being bound to a particular person, as stated by one of the Executive Committee members: "It's important for the [future of the] school that it is able to continue its activities independently of who is running it." (Committee member 2)

Diminishing Visibility

During the period of data collection, the participants in Barcelona had a strong sense that they were experiencing changes in the way the school works. Nonetheless, as time went by some of the changes were no longer as visible as when first implemented, as the example given by one of the teachers indicates:

We have suddenly realized that a year ago we did not know which criteria to use to split the classes. In fact, a lot of conflict was generated because of this issue. Nowadays, the way the classes are divided is an established procedure for all of us—directors, teachers and parents. We feel as if it has always been like this! (Teacher 1)

5 Discussion

The school in London completed the cycle of change in question in 2004, whereas the school in Barcelona was still in the process of implementing their innovations at the time of data collection. Nonetheless, both had the grouping of the students and procedural and structural organization as relevant innovations. The schools' negotiations regarding change included both informal and formal agreements through which directors, coordinators, teachers, and parents were consulted. Applying Ekholm and Trier's (1987) indicators of institutionalization, the negotiations in order to agree on these innovations are, in general terms, reported to be successful in both schools.

Innovations pertaining to the number of groups and their characteristics resulted from the growth of the Brazilian community in London and in Barcelona, as the profile of the children attending the lessons became more varied in relation to age and language competence. The new families demanded lessons for children aged less than a year to preteens. The new population of pupils included children who had been born in Europe and only spoke the local language and children who had been born in Brazil, migrated at a later age, and only spoke Portuguese. There were also children of the same age whose linguistic profile varied along a continuum between these two extremes. In Barcelona, the linguistic context is even more complex due to the fact that Catalonia has two official languages: Spanish and Catalan. Despite these complexities, the schools were responsive to the changes observed in their communities and acted to facilitate the incorporation of these changes into their services. Being responsive to change is the attitude advocated by Blenkin, Edwards, and Kelly (1992) as necessary to ensuring a positive relationship between individuals and change itself.

Both schools started their activities with very restricted allocation of resources. Ekholm and Trier (1987, p. 17) point out that the routine allocation of resources is important for institutionalization, and the schools had to face this challenge as volunteer-run organizations. Both Executive Committees are made up of volunteers, and the only initial material resources they had were the nominal fees paid by the parents to cover room rental and teachers' salaries. Consequently, they resorted to fundraising events to support their activities. The school in London became famous for

its June parties, Festas Juninas. The school in Barcelona is known for its carnival celebrations, Carnavais. Both events are integral to Brazilian cultural and social celebrations. Therefore, the goals of the events helped the institutions in both their fundraising initiatives as much as they provided yet another context for the socialization of their members and the dissemination of Brazilian culture in their host countries. A better financial context, however, was presented to the school in Barcelona when it received a grant from the Brazilian government shortly after it began its program of innovation in the teaching of POLH. The school in London, by contrast, faced its institutionalization process before these grants were available. Having said that, their status as a charity in the UK allowed them to benefit from lower venue rental fees. In spite of these advantages, financial resources are still a challenge for both schools.

It is also relevant to consider these schools' situation in relation to human resources. Many of the teachers of POLH are not trained to teach in the context of complementary schools. They tend to be primary or secondary teachers from Brazil who were trained to teach monocultural learners with high monolingual competence in Portuguese. As discussed above, the learners of POLH present a great variety of competencies in both Portuguese and the language of the host country—in our case, English or Spanish and Catalan. There are also a number of teachers with a background in psychology or the arts. These teachers make significant contributions to the teaching of POLH by virtue of their areas of expertise, nevertheless there are limitations to what they can offer in terms of language teaching pedagogy, especially in the case of schools led by non-educators. The pedagogical growth of these individuals depends highly on their motivation, since the resources available to financially support their training and professional development are extremely restricted. In the case of the complementary school in London, teachers were paid to attend only one formal meeting a month during the institutionalization process. All the other consultations were done in the teachers' free time and were not financially rewarded. Moreover, formal teacher training courses started in London only in 2013 (Abrir, n.d.), and thus did not affect the group of teachers in this study. The teachers in Spain have an advantage in that one of the members of the school Executive Committee is a teacher and teacher training courses were available to them only three years after the establishment of the school. Nevertheless, both schools would benefit from more financial resources, which would naturally imply better possibilities for training their teachers both in-house and at other institutions.

It appears, however, that the limitations in the resources (i.e., material and personnel) available to these schools were not an obstacle to the involvement of teachers and directors in the process of innovation. The Executive Committee members and the teachers in both locations were highly involved and engaged, not due to financial interest but rather to their social and emotional commitment to the cause of serving the needs of their students. A teacher in Barcelona states that her "relationship with the school is not only professional" but that she is "emotionally linked to the school and its other members." Similar statements were made by the participants in London. They were aware of the limitations of the context in which they worked and were highly motivated to contribute to any possible improvement that could result from their participation. In other words, they were extremely committed to learning and contributed to the creation of an environment where collaboration and mutual support is nurtured.

Another indicator of institutionalization that Ekholm and Trier (1987) point to is the lack of dependence of an innovation on "specific persons" (p. 17). Despite the collaboration and

atmosphere of mutual support, the dependence of the innovations on the figure of the coordinators in the school in London was clear, as reported in the interviews for this study. Being aware of the situation, one of the coordinators considered it important to create organizational procedures and documentation for the continuation of the changes, independent of particular coordinators and teachers. In the case of the school in Barcelona, the figure of the pedagogical coordinator does not exist. Consequently, the teachers themselves have voiced their own concerns about the organizational structure of the school, and there is less dependency on one single figure for the changes to take place. Nevertheless, the same need to document the changes is reported. As pointed out by one of the teachers in Barcelona, having a record of the changes and producing a guiding document for the school is relevant in order to “ensure that their founding aims are followed when they [the people who developed the project] are no longer part of the group.” This lack of dependency on one single person, and an awareness of the disadvantages of this situation, together with the development of systems that can be passed forward to ensure continuity of instruction are signs of institutionalization in both schools (Ekholm & Trier, 1987).

In the school in London, having organizational procedures that included team meetings, deciding on pedagogical content and planning together, and developing guidelines were paramount in contributing to the acceptance of the innovation as a common practice and eventually its diminished visibility (Ekholm & Trier, 1987, p. 17). The documents produced reflected the discussions between directors and teachers and the experiences the teachers and coordinators had in working together. Instead of explaining the changes or imposing them on the teachers, the coordinators consulted with the teachers and gave them the opportunity to experiment with new ideas, to share their knowledge and experience, to work together, to be involved. This meant that shared goals were developed within a supportive environment, important ingredients for the success of any school improvement (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2012). Feeling part of the process ensured high levels of acceptance of the changes by the teachers.

The teachers in Barcelona were the ones who had the initiative to develop criteria for the different groups or levels of students. Additionally, their pedagogical project (i.e., the definition of objectives, the selection of content, and the use of diagnostic and formative assessments) is in development.⁵ The teachers liaise face- to- face as well as online in order to discuss their ideas and write them up in the form of documents. Although these are the early stages of the institutionalization process in Barcelona, there are already signs that the visibility of the changes being implemented is diminishing.

6 Conclusion

The Brazilian complementary school in London and the one in Barcelona illustrate six stages of the institutionalization process (see Figure 8.1) involving changes that resulted from the collaboration among teachers and other members of the school. Collaboration is an essential characteristic of schools that nurture and sustain a community of learners (Antonacci & Bernhardt, 1998). Moreover, “the school as a learning community [is] where life- long learning takes place for all stakeholders for their own continuous growth and development . . . and mistakes become agents for further learning and improvement” (Voulalas & Sharpe, 2005, p. 191). That is, an ethos of collaboration is crucial for the successful implementation of innovations.

In the case of the school in London, the first cycle of institutionalizing their innovations took seven years. Although this length of time might appear to be too long, it has been acknowledged that changes related to group behavior have much higher levels of difficulty and thus take much longer to instantiate than other types, such as changes related to knowledge (Morrish, 1976/2012). Furthermore, instead of accelerating change, we should facilitate it (Blenkin et al., 1992). This means that differences (or similarities) in pace of change at each school should be respected.

Another challenge mentioned by the London participants was the change in the school leadership. Some of the new leaders had a different approach when relating to their staff or were not very familiar with the innovations being implemented. Yet another challenge was that the adoption of documentation that supported the innovations gave a false sense that the teachers alone could ensure the establishment of the change and its insertion into the school routine. They relied on their Teachers' Handbook and decided not to have a coordinator for a period of about six months after it was produced. It was then noticed that collegiality—i.e., continuous teacher-teacher and teachers-administrators talks about the lessons, lesson plans, selection of materials, and learning (Little, 1981, in Antonacci & Bernhardt, 1998)—was disappearing. Fortunately, the negative effects of the lack of collegiality were soon noticed by the team and a new coordinator was hired to ensure continuity of their innovations.

As pointed out by Morrish (2012), “Things never just stay as they are, they change whether they improve or decay” (p. 15). Therefore, it is important that complementary schools are aware of the stages discussed above, so that they can approach their institutionalization process in a more conscious way and ensure improvement. Additionally, although not covered in this chapter, specific linguistic and pedagogical challenges faced by the schools should be considered to ensure the design of strategies that address them adequately. After all, positive change “simply will not happen without planning and effort” (Eiseman, Fleming, & Roody, 1990, p. 24).

Notes

- 1 This was the situation at the time this chapter was written.
- 2 In the UK, a scheme of work is a document in which teachers describe lesson aims, objectives, and activities; time activities; list lesson resources; and present assessments and homework.
- 3 All the interviews were conducted in Portuguese and translated into English by the authors.
- 4 The school had two coordinators between 1998 and 2004. The first one is being referred to as Coordinator 1 and the second is one of the authors (see section 4).
- 5 Therefore, they are not reported in this chapter yet.

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